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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an overview of the course taken by the United States to improve its public education system in response to the issue of global competitiveness. The nation's attempts at reform of public schooling since 1983 are described, recommendations from the report "A Nation at Risk" are summarized, and teacher education reform within the broader context of reform is charted. Specific information is provided on what has happened in the Springfield, Massachusetts Public Schools and how reforms can take hold in transforming schools. It is suggested that for real change to take place, the place to look for change is at the school level and in the classroom. All reform must move toward making the school and the classroom the unit of change. This vision for change focuses on: (1) improving student outcomes; (2) restructuring teaching practice; (3) fostering integration in all schools; (4) developing partnerships through collaboration and site based management. (VWL)

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A Superintendent's Evaluation of Teacher Education Reform

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Transforming American Education: Making It Work

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American education like the U.S.S.R. is undergoing the most dramatic self-analysis since we decided early in our history that education would be available to everyone in this country. However, it seems that communism is easier to change than the present framework of American education.

In America, we became used to identifying the problems and then simply using good old American ingenuity, resoluteness, stick to it, determination, and get the job done. Well, we are finding that the old ways simply do not work anymore. Thus, America is on a mission, a search to improve the way it does everything so it can stay globally competitive with the rest of the world; and so it is with education.

This paper will take its reader through the course taken by this country to improve its public education system in response to the issue of global competitiveness. It will describe the nation's attempts at reform on public schooling since 1983 and chart teacher education reform within the broad reform context.

The paper will then share with you what has happened in the Springfield Public Schools and how the reforms can take hold in transforming schools.

For American public education, it would seem 1983 was the year that we discovered something was wrong with our schools. The report "A Nation at Risk" provides a broad set of recommendations for reforming our public schools. However, it is important to note that America has had other comprehensive reports that have called for sweeping reform in public education prior to 1983. Preceding "A Nation at Risk" were The Report of the Committee of Ten in 1983, the American High School Today in 1959, and the Cardinal Principals of Secondary Education in 1918. All of these, while different in intent and content, were dramatic efforts, to reform public education. Thus, to understand the present reform efforts, they must be viewed within the broader context of American educational reform.

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The recommendations from "A Nation at Risk" are summarized in this table.

Recommendations from A Nation at Risk

I. Content

A. High School graduation requirements raised five new basics:

1. Four years of English: extended reading and writing skills and knowledge of our literacy heritage.

2. Three years of math:

   a. Higher-order mathematics such as geometry, algebra, and statistics.
   b. Estimation, approximation, measurement, and accuracy testing.
   c. A curriculum for those not planning college immediately.

3. Three years of science:

   a. Higher-order sciences, scientific reasoning, and inquiry.
   b. Application of scientific knowledge and technology.

4. Three years of social studies:

   a. Studies of selves and others in the continuum of time and culture.
   b. Understand social, economic, and political systems.

5. A half-year of computer science:

   a. Basic computer literacy and use of computers in other subjects.
   b. Comprehension of electronics and related technologies.

6. For the college-bound, 2 years of foreign language in high school is strongly recommended, in addition to 4-6 years of such study in the elementary grades (p.p. 24 and 26).

B. Upgrade elementary curriculum -- foreign language, English development in writing, problem-solving skills, science, social studies, and the arts.

C. Outside experts to improve and disseminate quality curricular materials: Evidence of text quality and currency from publishers.

II. Standards and Expectations

A. All educational institutions to adopt more rigorous academic standards: Grades to be indicators of achievement.

B. Standardized tests of achievement at transition points.

III. Time

A. More learning time: efficient time use, longer day, or longer year.

1. More homework and instruction for study skills
2. Districts to consider seven-hour days and 200- to 220- day schools years.
3. Efficient management of the school day and class organization.
4. The strengthening of attendance incentives and sanctions.
5. Reduction of administrative and discipline burdens, and intrusion on teachers.

IV. Teaching

A. Improve preparation for and desirability of teaching

1. Higher standards for incoming teachers; judge programs by quality of graduates
2. Competitive, market-sensitive, and performance- based salaries; career decisions based on evaluation.
3. Career ladders and 11-month contract
4. Alternative credentialing, grants, and loans to attract teachers
5. Master teachers' plan programs for probationary teaching and supervision

V. Citizen and Federal Involvement and Fiscal Support

A. Citizens oversee reform and provide financial support

B. Administrative and legislative officials provide stability and finance for reforms.

C. Federal government identifies national interest, provides leadership, and supports states and local districts.

Source: National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk: The imperative for educational reform (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.)

As one can see from this table, the recommendations are divided into five major areas:

1. Content
2. Standards and Expectations
3. Time
4. Teaching
5. Citizen and Federal Involvement and Fiscal Support.

It is important to note that this report, while it has been the cornerstone of the reform effort, has undergone a myriad of additions as a result of the proliferation of additional reports and studies undertaken since "A Nation at Risk." This very well may be the deciding difference between this reform period in American public education and the others mentioned above.

The initial reaction of states to "A Nation at Risk" centered around considering over 1000 pieces of legislation concerning teachers and teaching from 1983 to 1988 (Darling - Hammond and Berry 1988). The concentration during this period of time was to emphasize state driven and state mandated changes to reforms. These included increased time in school, more courses to graduate from high school, defined curricula, and promotional standards. These reforms were very evident during the author's superintendency in New York City between 1978 and 1987. All of these measures were largely driven by the central authority or Board of Education and were mandated without any or very little local input. As was the case in the nation, they did very little to change outcomes or increase the academic achievement of youngsters. In fact, the evidence indicates that very little changed in the area of teaching and learning (Carnegie Forum 1986).

While it is true that this period of state mandated reform served as a galvanizing force to reap further attention on reform, it clearly did not prove successful at altering the way we were doing business. The fact is that we recognized that state driven reform could only be a part of the effort to change the results of public education (Firestone, W.A., Fuhrman, S.H. and Kirst, M. W., 1989)

Another important element of the reform movement has been an attempt to change teachers. If one wants to have an impact on students, the surest way to do that is to have better teachers teaching the students. This sounds simple enough but, on second thought and on more pronounced examination, one begins to see the quality of teacher issues very differently.

First, we must all agree that teachers are a critical element in the reform agenda and, if we are to change outcomes, we must change input. However, this leads us to the question, "Are teachers doing the wrong things when they are teaching?" This question leads to some very strong reactions. Lawrence Lezotte, the school effectiveness guru from Michigan, says that teachers are working as hard as they can work and doing as well as they can based on their present knowledge and skills as well as the conditions under which they presently work. He says that if we are to improve their teaching, we must improve their skills and knowledge as well as the conditions under which they work. This is no mean feat since we have more than 2.6 million teachers in this country.

Of course, we could say that the way we could alter public education and its results is to train a new wave of teachers. These teachers would come to the profession from the top quarter of their graduating class, highly skilled in working with students of diverse backgrounds, very knowledgeable in their field as well as highly skilled in using advanced techniques that consider the latest research findings available in teaching and learning as well as having a very high expectation for their students. The truth is that some changes are taking place in preservice education programs, however, not nearly so dramatic as is necessary to produce the ideal teacher we just described.

Even if we were able to transform our teacher preparation institutions so that they could produce such ideal teachers we would still have two major problems. The first one is that most of the 2.6 million teachers we now have will be teaching in ten years so that new teacher preparation programs would not have an impact on the majority of teachers. The second is that most new teachers who are trained in a new way would be going into schools where old attitudes would prevail. It is much more likely that these new teachers would succumb to the approaches, attitudes, and conditions found in the majority of the existing teachers at a particular school -- the culture of the school. Thus, it is not practical to think that we can fully reform public education by creating teacher education programs that prepare a new type of teacher.

While teacher preparation programs will have an impact on a limited number of teachers over a long period of time, it seems likely

that we still must reform present programs both in what they offer and how they offer it.

As such, a six-year teacher preparation program is proposed that combines a four-year bachelor's degree and a two-year master's program. In order to become a teacher in this country, a person would have to complete a six-year program. The final two years of the program, which could have broad variation from school to school, would be subsidized by the federal government and include a one-year practicum. The apprentice teacher would work in a school under the tutorage of the staff of the school. The apprentice teacher would both, be paid a stipend and receive tuition reimbursement from the federal government, and the school would receive a stipend for each teacher it accepts as an apprentice. This makes it a win-win situation for both groups and would encourage participating teachers and schools to accept apprentice teachers.

In spite of the problems described in the area of teacher preparation, there has been a great deal of attention paid to improving teacher professionalism. Two reports on improving the preparation of teachers were Tomorrow's Teachers (Holmes Group 1986), A Nation Prepared: Teacher for the 21st Century prepared by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession (1986). The Carnegie Foundation also has moved forward on funding and research for the development of a national teacher certification system.

This interest in teacher preparation and professionalism has naturally led to the question of teacher testing. Should teachers, as other professionals, be required to take a state examination to qualify them for a certificate that allows them to teach in that state. The discussion on teacher testing has raged in the profession with advocates for testing indicating that, while these tests do not assure quality teachers, they ascertain minimum knowledge and skills in subject areas as well as an understanding of pedagogy that would at least propose a basis for minimum competency and possible success in teaching (Madaus and Pullin 1987).

Teacher testing has proliferated in America with forty-four states having adopted some form of test requirements to be eligible for teacher certification. One central piece of criticism with respect to teacher testing has been the impact of testing on the admission of minorities into teaching. The evidence supports that minorities have not done as well on tests as majority applicants. The question of testing is still open and under discussion and scrutiny. The same questions with respect to student testing are being examined in the area of teacher testing. Will certification tests create the conditions where teacher preparation institutions in effect teach to the test? I believe the answer to this question is the same as reference to student test-

ing. Until we have an array of testing instruments and strategies that go beyond the multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blanks variety we will find difficulty in assuring that tests are not inappropriate disqualifiers. This is one of the areas that continues to require a great deal of study and analysis before we come up with the right answer.

In view of all of this, the federal government must take some initiative in providing resources in two areas. The first is a broad analysis of assessment practices both for students and teachers with an attempt to develop instruments that deal with all of the issues I have raised as well as concentrate on assessing the new initiatives of education. The federal government must support research that will develop a new series of assessment tools. We must be able to measure the ability of teachers and students to think creatively, problem solve, negotiate solutions, work in teams, etcetera. These new assessment instruments cannot be developed haphazardly. Their development requires a commitment from the federal government to support national models. At the present time, some states and school systems are working on this issue; however, a national effort would be more cost effective. The federal government must take a leadership role in developing model teacher preparation programs that deal with these issues. This modest plan would stimulate interest in teaching and attract minorities into the profession.

It is clear that state driven reforms as described and teacher education reforms have not and will not yield the results we need to become a globally competitive nation. The question is where do we go from here in restructuring and reform if we are to do what we set out to do in the first place, which was to create public schools that can produce youngsters who can compete in the global marketplace. The fact is that only broad systemic change that touches on every part of schooling can have lasting, significant, and effective impact on results.

From a practicing superintendent's perspective, the author can identify an ongoing change model that is attempting to deal with reform from a transformational perspective. We believe that we have in Springfield embarked on a process that incorporates all of the elements necessary for systemic change to take place.

In order for real change to take place, we must understand that the place where we must look for this change is at the school level and in the classroom. All reform must move toward making the school and the classroom the unit of change. We must make schools and teachers responsible for their own destiny. This vision for our school system encompasses a change model that focuses on:

- improving student outcomes

- restructuring teaching practice
- fostering integration in all schools
- developing partnerships through collaboration and site based management.

As such, there are four major transformations that must take place. They are organizational, pedagogical, social, and attitudinal, as well as political.

Organizational

These refer to the very structure and instructional models upon which our schools are based. Our schools are presently organized around an industrial model rather than an informational model. Schools are presently organized to produce young people that are capable of working in isolation and taking direction. They are meant to produce young people who can relate to machines and not to other people. The role of the school is such that it attempts to extinguish the natural desire of people to gather, be inquisitive, and interact. Schools are organized as places where learning is a private psychological matter. The new world requires a total transformation of the organizational structure of schools.

Schools must move to become places where the organizational structure and the pedagogical models stress the importance of producing students who have the following specific skills:

- Higher thinking skills
- Be able to frame new ideas and problem solve
- Creative thinking
- Ability to conceptualize
- Be adaptable to change
- Good human relations skills
- Work in a team atmosphere
- Be able to re-learn
- Good oral communication skills
- Negotiation -- ability to build consensus, resolve conflicts

- Goal setting -- motivation, know how to get things done
- Self-assured and determined to work well
- Have many and varied work skills, including office, mechanical, and laboratory skills.
- Ability to work under pressure.
- Leadership -- ability to assume responsibility and motivate co-workers.

In order to do this, we must transform the organizational norm to one that recognizes and supports people who are able to work together and collaborate on problem identification, analysis, and solutions. In schools today, children who seek help from others are often labeled as trouble makers or even cheaters. We must organize schools in such a way that the needs of the students become the focus of the organizational structure. This means we must examine how we use time in the structure. The present practices of grade levels, scheduling, time devoted to specific subject areas, the relationship between subject areas, content coverage, length of school day and school year, and subject matter taught, must all be thoroughly examined. It is probable that the organizational structure of today's schools will be dramatically different in three years. Achieving the goal of developing problem-solving and higher order thinking skills in youth is tricky business that requires a transformation in content and pedagogy as well as in the structure of the educational enterprise.

Pedagogical

There is a growing body of evidence that indicates that present instructional delivery models cannot survive if we are to meet the needs of a twenty-first century world. It is clear that we have a growing body of knowledge about the way people learn that will strongly influence future pedagogy. These changes are not the traditional changes in methods and approaches. They are based on medical evidence that recognizes the very complex functioning of the human brain. Different people learn in different ways and it is the role of the teacher to adapt teaching techniques to learning styles. This pedagogical transformation will have a profound and lasting influence on schools and how they look in the future.

Social and Attitudinal

During the industrial society, America had a very defined set of expectations for the distribution of results. It was clear that society

was controlled by a few people at the top (totally dominated by men) with most people in the middle working and taking direction from people at the top. There was a small group at the bottom who had to be taken care of by society. This group would constitute what I refer to as throw away people. The group at the bottom was in effect the excess of human capital.

These were people who our society did not need for it to be economically successful but for whom we felt a societal obligation.

As we have moved into the information society we are recognizing the need for us to change our expectation of the distribution of results. The fact is that present conditions in our country are moving us from a moral imperative to educate all to an economic imperative to educate all. American business is facing a most critical challenge in the coming century. Consider the following:

- American industry will develop 16 million new jobs by the early twenty-first century; however, it will have only 14 million people to fill these jobs.

- Of these 14 million new entrants into the workplace, a majority will be female and/or minority. This is a group that, historically, has been underprepared. A majority of these new entrants into the work force will be high risk employees. How can a country that already will have a shortage of 2 million workers cope with workers that are at risk employees and not capable of productively entering the job market? Under these circumstances, American business will not be able to survive. It becomes clear that American industry cannot afford to have at-risk workers if it is to be globally competitive.

- A majority of these 16 million new jobs will require skills far beyond those we expect of entrants into the work force today. It is estimated that 50 percent of these new jobs will require a college degree. Seventy-five percent will require at least two years of college.

While American industry today is spending between 30 and 40 billion dollars on training efforts for its employees, this investment is not enough. The schools must produce a new kind of worker for the twenty-first century who will need a new literacy and the ability to relearn and be adaptable for it is predicted that today's first graders will change jobs from four to seven times during their lifetime. Up to 50 million may need retraining in the next 10 years; 21 million new entrants plus 30 million current workers.

The truth is that America will no longer have an excess of human capital. It needs every citizen to be a productive and contributing member of society. The problem is that there is a looming mismatch between the needs of industry (the skills required of new workers) and the type of worker or student we are graduating from our schools.

American society and American schools must change their expectations of the distribution of results. People who were traditionally not expected to succeed must now succeed if our economy is to survive. This requires a complete social and attitudinal transformation on the part of our society and more specifically our teachers. The challenge has now become not teaching children to the best of their potential but teaching students to the best of our potential. The new paradigm indicates that it is what we do in the schools in response to how the children come to school that makes the difference and not how they come to school. This transformation is possibly the most challenging and the most difficult for the American public school to make.

Political

This area of transformation has several parts and includes political change within the school construct as well as in government and society in general. First, it is important that we recognize that we live in a society that has had as its underpinning a strong middle class. This middle class as of late has not been replenishing itself. An analysis of our national birth rate indicates that the middle class is having about one and one-half babies per marriage. This means that the natural replenishment of the middle class is not taking place. By comparison, the birthrate for poor people is exploding. The growing sector in this country is the children of the poor.

The political question here surrounds the will of this country to educate those that it has traditionally ignored. Will American society understand the political and economic repercussions and implications of not educating its poor? Will American society support public education in urban centers when the people being educated do not resemble both in class and color the people controlling the economics of those urban centers?

The additional fundamental issue of equity and excellence must also be addressed within the political context. At the present, where you are born will to a great extent determine the quality of your education. There are communities in this country that spend $1,200 a year per child while others spend as high as $14,000 per child. While we understand the issue is not money alone, how could anyone accept that there is not an inherent political inequality in this funding approach.

A political transformation is required at the local and federal level in the area of funding public education. We cannot continue to run away from this reality. This is the political issue of our times that must be confronted very soon in this country.

An additional political transformation that must take place revolves around what we teach our children and how we measure what we teach. The how we teach them was dealt with in the pedagogical and organizational transformation. We must come to some political agreement on what we expect our children to know and how we will measure what they know. These two areas demand broad national attention and must be resolved politically.

The final political transformation requires American public education and its governance to remain at the local level. All attempts to nationalize education are filled with danger; however, America must develop a federal funding process that is supportive of an equal education for all. This is one of the major areas of political transformation that must take place during the 1990s.

We as a nation must develop a plan to improve education that includes financial support to deal with all of the issues that face our children. We must combine the appropriate distribution of money with adequate accountability so that money would not be wasted as is the case in so many federal programs.

As I have already indicated, the single most critical issue in education today is one of equity. Does every child born in America have equal access to an effective and appropriate education? Our present system is such that if you are born poor, you will more than likely receive an inferior education. The difference between what is spent on poor children and what is spent on middle class children, as previously indicated, is immense. Moreover, the research is clearly in support of the implementation of early childhood programs that provide a firm foundation for continued development and academic achievement. Why not begin all schooling at age 4 and continue for 13 years? This change in age would not increase the number of years of K-12 education, but would provide education during those important formative years, and would allow students to end at age 17. Then, they can continue learning as an apprentice at a job or continue a postsecondary education. All that we know about the changes in society and the workplace indicate that the worker of tomorrow must be capable in many skill areas and must have higher thinking ability. Beginning earlier and providing a continuum of educational opportunities will go a long way in addressing these new challenges.

We are at the crossroads of choosing to pay adequately for the education of all children regardless of where they live, the color of their skin, or the language they speak.

The federal government must play a more intensive role in the funding of American public education. The link between our economic survival as a nation and education has been clearly defined. The question is more how America can raise funds for accomplishing this task. We must institute a tax program that specifically raises funds for education. The author proposes a U.S. Mail Education Surcharge. Why not a 15 cent education surcharge on every piece of mail with a higher scale for pieces of mail that cost over one dollar? This education tax would affect every individual and every business in our nation. An equitable distribution plan for this money would also be easy to devise.

These transformations can take place in America if we understand and accept the following precepts:

1. Money is not the answer, but without money we cannot do the job.

2. Children do not come to school the same way; however, it is our response to how they come that makes the difference.

3. Some children cost more to educate than others. It is in our best interest to educate them all.

4. The present system of funding public education is inequitable and must be changed. Where you are born to a great extent determines how much will be spent to educate you.

5. The classroom and school is the unit of change and, as such, local governance must be promoted, encouraged, and maintained.

6. The present model of education must be adjusted so that first time quality becomes the norm and not remediation as is presently the case. Thus, schools must change their focus. Education or Schooling should begin at 4 years old for all youngsters. This can be done without spending additional money. All we would have to do is rearrange our present curriculum and keep kids in school for 13 years; just begin one year earlier. This would take several years to implement.

7. The relationship between the school, the home, and the community must be understood and internalized. Schools need the community and the community needs the schools. They cannot exist independent of each other.

8. We must realign our goals with our curriculum. What is it that students really need to know for the twenty-first century? It is insane and silly to teach well what these students cannot use. Every community must ask itself what do we want our children to know? What will we accept as evidence that they have learned? How can we measure what they have learned? Multidimensional assessments must be developed to accomplish this task.

9. Our classrooms and the way they look and are organized must change dramatically. We know enough to do this right now. The research on how children learn is exploding before our eyes; yet we have not implemented one-tenth of what we know about learning and teaching.

10. We have not focused on technology as the key to the future. We are not using even one-tenth of the power of technology. We must move from the chalkboard to the electronic whiteboard. We must integrate learning areas around the technology that exists.

11. We must learn the principle of organized abandonment. Abandon the things that have not worked for a long time such as age grade grouping, retention, tracking, standardized tests, the Carnegie unit as a process and not a product unit; we must abandon our present system of scheduling, particularly at the high school level. We must abandon specific student to teacher ratio and let teachers decide what is necessary, appropriate, and effective.

12. We must transform our schools from places where people are told what to do, to places where students, parents, teachers, and administrators identify the issues and provide the solutions. These constituencies must be able to exercise control over their own destiny. With this control and power will come increased accountability. As we provide the staff with this empowerment, they will be able to greatly influence learning. This should naturally lead them to commanding higher salaries and status.

13. We must use choice as a school reform methodology with great care. It must be crafted so that it does not lead to additional inequities for a segment of our population or as a divider of the haves and have nots.

14. We need massive teacher training programs that will help teachers understand the new ways available to educate their youngsters. This must be done at the school level and planned and developed by teachers.

15. We need additional time in the school day where teachers can

plan together around the issues that confront them. Schools must become units of change where teachers see the interdependence of what they teach and how they work and support each other.

16. We need to have everyone in America understand the seriousness of our work and the interdependence of the quality of life in our community and the quality of our schools. We need as a nation to understand the relationship between quality education and the salvation of our democracy.

In Springfield, Massachusetts, a city of 165,000 people with a school population of 25,000 students, 30 percent which are Hispanic, 30 percent which are Afro-American and 40 percent which are white, we began a restructuring effort in September 1989 at all forty schools, which centered around the four transformational efforts we have previously described.

When the author came to Springfield in September of 1989, he was given a charge by the School Committee to bring broad, comprehensive, and systemic change to the school system. They had been struck by his comment during the interview process that said if you want to keep getting what you have been getting, keep doing what you have been doing. If you want new results, you have to dramatically change what you are doing. The system was ready for change and that change process was detailed in a report called Blueprint for Excellence presented to the community in November 1989. The report was a blueprint for change that would be adjusted with the broad input of all the constituencies in the community.

The change process had as its main focus the improvement of the schools through collaboration and cooperation. In order to focus the attention of the community on what had to be done, four talking papers were prepared and four task forces were created with representatives from every segment of the community. The four task forces were:

1. Central Office Reorganization.
2. Restructuring of Grades
3. Curriculum For the Twenty-First Century
4. Effective Schools Research and Implementation

The four task force reports formed the cornerstone for the work accomplished during the first and second year of this reform effort.

The Central Office reorganization led to a more streamlined Central Office. Since there was to be a massive shift in authority to the schools, the responsibilities of the Central Office would change. The Central Office took on a new role. It moved from the role of director

to assistor. Rather than telling people what to do, we became enablers, resource providers, or facilitators. This was and continues to be one of the most difficult paradigm shifts in the system.

The second task force came to its conclusions very swiftly in that everyone knew that the K-4, 5-6, 7-9, and 10-12 organizational structure was antiquated and not working. The task force recommended a conversion to a K-5, 6-8, two K-8 schools, and 9-12 system. In order to do this and also improve our integration efforts, which were out of compliance, we developed a Schools of Choice Plan that incorporated elements from controlled choice plans that had been implemented in several cities across the country. The changes, therefore, included a new grade structure for the entire system, a controlled choice plan where each school had developed a very specific theme that made distinct, the conversion from a junior high school philosophy and approach to a middle school concept, as well as the conversion of all 10 to 12 schools to a grade 9-12 high school system. This required the closing of a junior high school and its conversion to a 9th grade annex for a high school. All of the students in the system were given a choice in the selection of four possible schools. Eighty-four percent of the parents received their first choice and dramatic improvement was made in the area of racial balance.

A volunteer transfer plan was developed with the Teachers' Union, and more than 450 teachers were transferred to the schools of their choice. In addition, a special agreement with the Supervisors' Union led to the movement of 10 Central Office administrators to school based supervisory positions.

The third task force Curriculum for the Twenty-First Century reaffirmed all of the recommendations in the talking paper which centered around realigning the curriculum so that specific goals and objectives were very defined for teachers. It included the implementation of a technology based model of assessment that would be developed by teachers. The plan outlined the expectations of a twenty-first century curriculum which included a detailed process for periodic review in the area of comprehensiveness, authenticity, and quality. It also incorporates a broad school centered staff development program as part of the process.

The emphasis of this task force was to create a curriculum process that emphasizes students' ability to reproduce and use knowledge. It also stresses a curriculum for all of the children and not for one that is tailored to a chosen few.

The Effective Schools Research Task Force reaffirmed the intent of the talking paper and went several steps further. It recognized the need to incorporate into the very culture of the system the finding of effective schools research. It led to Lawrence Lezotte and

James Comer becoming major consultants to the school system. It also stressed the importance of the continued decentralization of the school system through school centered decision making. All 40 schools now have site-based teams that have begun to be responsible for the operation of the school. During contract negotiations with the teachers for the 1991-92 school year, a letter was signed that formally introduced site-based management and teacher empowerment into the contract.

In addition to this, the union, the central administration, supervisors and the business community have begun negotiations around the introduction of a total quality management program in the system.

The superintendent and the entire staff of the Springfield Public Schools were steadfast in our goal to provide an equitable education for all. We could not stand still to await a better day. We decided, in spite of drastic budget cuts, to identify the major issues confronting our school system. We recognized our growing student population and the need to fulfill the promise that had been made to the community of a K-8 magnet school; therefore, we pursued plans to build this new school. The plans were formally approved by the state and we broke ground in March for a school that will open in 1991 for 1,000 students. We implemented the Schools of Choice Plan that involved the community in an unprecedented way. At a Schools Fair which opened a three week application period for all students in kindergarten through grade 9, more than 10,000 parents came, reviewed the school booths, and spoke with staff. During the ensuing weeks, thousands of parents visited the schools they were considering. A new era in public education in Springfield had begun. These parents who sought the best school for their child will also continue to be involved at the school to ensure that the promise is realized.

In September 1991, the Springfield Public Schools opened with all grades restructured. Parents could choose a kindergarten through grade 5 school within their educational zone or a kindergarten through grade 8 school in a city-wide magnet offering. Middle schools, grades 6-8, were made accessible to all students city-wide as well as the high schools, grades 9-12.

But we all know that this was just the beginning. The framework for excellence in education was set. The results, however, in student achievement are affected by more than grade structure. We have explored alternative solutions to ensure teaching for learning as well as equity and excellence for all children. We have the will to make each school an improving school. Though we have just begun, our journey is clear and direct to making every school in Springfield work for all its children.

In Phase I, we set the framework for school improvement with the Blueprint for Excellence, which identified areas of immediate concern and long-range planning -- all of which included all of the constituencies in a policy of inclusion.

The policy of inclusion included the task forces that were previously described; however, at the same time, we developed very specific initiatives to involve the community in our schools. We believe that schools cannot exist in isolation of the community. A community cannot have an effective quality of life without effective schools to support that quality of life.

As such, we developed four major initiatives that would stress the involvement of the broad community. They were Parental Involvement, the Conference for Children, the Business Education Agreement, and the Religious Community Initiative. In the first initiative, we sat with groups of parents and created a parent involvement policy that was truly revolutionary. It created the Springfield Parent Advisory Network (SPAN) which would be an organization that represented all of the parents in Springfield. The policy that was adopted by the school committee created a working parents organization in every school as a requirement of the system. In addition, the parents have been provided professional organizing assistance paid for by the school system. This has created an independent organization that acts as an advocate for children and families.

The Conference for Children was an initiative that convened more than 300 public and private service providers. The intent of the conference was to develop a process or institution in the city that would become responsible for making the city a child-centered city. These 300 agencies and individuals signed a document that created the Alliance for Youth in the city. A board of directors with representatives from the highest level sits on this board and gives direction to the Alliance for Youth. The Alliance has already developed several major initiatives for the children of the city including a conflict resolution-violence prevention program for students in the middle schools. The Alliance has served a major role in having private and public agencies provide direct services to children in the area of drug prevention, AIDS education, mental health services as well as child abuse prevention services.

The Business-Education Agreement was developed by the local Chamber of Commerce and the school system to address the issues confronting the schools and the business community. It clearly enumerates the role of business in improving the schools as well as the responsibilities and accountability of the school system. We have more than 60 companies participating in a variety of relationships with the schools.

The final initiative is possibly the most unique and thought to be the first of its kind in America. It convened over 100 religious leaders at a conference where they signed an agreement relative to how they would collaborate with the Springfield Public Schools. It outlined specific steps that the religious community would take to support the public schools. We have agreed as a major undertaking to support together the issue of social justice for all people. We are currently planning specific programs to implement this goal.

In Phase II, we continued dialogue with all the constituencies, addressed program design, redefined responsibilities, trained for new roles and teaching techniques, and implemented a Schools of Choice Plan.

Phase III, during 1991-92, will involve the implementation of solutions, continued training for all constituencies to prepare them for new roles of involvement, and the establishment of task forces in four critical planning areas -- early childhood, high schools, technology, and retention and tracking.

We have the capacity and the will to make Springfield the first city in the nation with an effective school system. We recognize the changing societal demands and influences on our students. We know what must change within the schools. New interventions and strategies on how to teach as well as renewed commitment and energy are focused on school improvement.

My challenge is for every American to take risks, to act boldly, to say our children must be saved. It is this philosophy that has been applied in the School Improvement Plan for the Springfield Public Schools. It would have been too easy to say we cannot try to better our educational program as we faced massive budget cuts in many areas; it would have been too easy to say that the state of our schools and our society is too complex for immediate positive results.

For those who recognize the need for change to meet the inevitable challenges of future life but wish to slow down the process, I say that world events and local implications are on an accelerated time piece.

Beyond the evident changes, we see reversals:

- countries that limited movement of their citizens now advocate freedom;

- places where capitalism was a bad word now embrace the basic tenets to address their people's deprivation;

- core curriculum changes that include and embrace non-western cultures and works;

- career plans that suited a life time must now incorporate multiple skills and directions;

- traditional family structures are being challenged by alternative structures;

- limited expectations for females relegated to an ideal view of the home has changed to allow equal access to careers -- not due to equity but to necessity both in the home and the workplace;

- isolation of the races and mobility for limited groups no longer works in a pluralistic society that requires all for economic and social success.

In 1970, John Holt wrote in What Do I Do Monday? -- "Every day's headlines show more clearly that the old ways, the "tried and true" ways, are simply and quite spectacularly not working. No point in arguing about who's to blame. The time has come to do something very different. The way to begin is -- to begin." Two decades is long enough to wait to begin. In Springfield, we cannot continue to accept a 40 percent dropout rate (60 percent among Hispanics); we cannot continue to blame others for the lack of individual success without addressing that which we can control; we cannot assume that the curriculum and methods of the past will serve us well in the present since those of us here are the survivors of a system that did not attempt to educate all children. We cannot postpone what is morally right.

I consider these accomplishments to be outstanding feats for such a short period. Of course there is a down side to this as there is to every story. The systemic changes necessary to institutionalize all of this has not taken place yet. There is a reluctance to give up the old and more importantly to relinquish power. There is a hesitancy at every juncture to agree to a process that will allow for multiple inputs and shared decision making if it leads to the loss of power.

What is required is incremental change and frequent small successes (measures of growth) that one can point to as the basis for further movement. Our role is to make the system work for the people it serves and not the people who run it. However, public institutions or systems, do not and will not reform themselves. They need coaxing, coercing, and reasons to change. They need outside intervention. My sense is that this bold experiment can work. Not enough has been done yet in Springfield to merit distinction -- but we do merit watching.

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